

8:58 a.m.

Tuesday, August 27, 1996

[Mr. Renner in the Chair]

THE CHAIRMAN: Good morning, everyone. I'd like to call this meeting to order. This is a regular meeting of the Standing Committee on Private Bills. We have before us an agenda, and I would like a motion to approve the agenda as circulated. Mr. Kowalski.

We also have circulated minutes from the last meeting, August 20. If everyone's had a chance to review those minutes, a motion to approve the minutes would be in order. Mrs. Soetaert.

Today we have the deliberations and recommendations regarding Bill Pr. 2, the Covenant Bible College Tax Exemption Act. Before we get into the discussion, I would like to point out to committee members that you should have before you a document that's entitled Revised Amendments. That's the document that we should be using this morning.

By way of explanation, committee members will remember that last week when we discussed the amendments to this Bill, there was an original document circulated, and then the petitioners asked for a number of other minor, technical amendments. Those have been incorporated into this revised document.

Also, on Friday the petitioners contacted the Parliamentary Counsel office and asked for one more minor revision, and that has to do with clause 5(1)(a). There have been two words added to that clause, and that also has been reflected in the revised document. That has to do with the issuance of certificates and diplomas in religious studies. We also have received a letter from advanced education, which you all have, acknowledging that they have no objection to that revised wording.

So in essence what we have before us, then, are amendments to the original Bill, which has received first reading, that substantially change that Bill. In fact, it changes the title of the Bill, and it in essence incorporates the college as a private bible college, thereby basically mirroring Bills that we passed this spring with respect to Evangel and Bethesda bible colleges.

With that, I would entertain a motion. I think it would be best if we had a motion on the floor, and then we can have any discussion to the motion.

MR. TRYNCHY: You wanted a motion to rescind the old Bill?

THE CHAIRMAN: No. If it's the will of this committee that this proceed, we would recommend to the Legislature that it would proceed with amendment, and the appropriate motion would be that it proceed with amendment. Then we can deal with the actual amendment itself. I don't expect that the wording of the amendment needs to be part of the motion but the amendment as circulated if you're in concurrence with the revised document.

MR. TRYNCHY: So the best way to go would be with an amendment instead of rescinding the previous Bill. Well, to get it started, I'll make the motion that we accept the amendment.

THE CHAIRMAN: All right. Then there's discussion to that amendment. The motion, then, is

that we recommend that the Bill proceed with amendment, and that the amendment is as circulated.

That's the revised document.

Is there any discussion to that motion?

MRS. LAING: Mr. Chairman, having just received the amendments, section A says, "In the title by . . . striking out 'Tax

Exemption'." Would you explain that to me, please?

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, the original Bill Pr. 2 is entitled Covenant Bible College Tax Exemption Act. By striking out the words "Tax Exemption," the new title will now read Covenant Bible College Act.

MRS. LAING: Does this mean that they're not specifically looking for tax exemption then or just the normal type?

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, they're entitled to certain tax concessions, provisions under the Municipal Government Act, but the Municipal Government Act refers to private colleges incorporated by private Bills of the Legislature. So if they have this incorporation under a private Bill, it will allow them to be eligible for tax provisions that would then be through the municipality.

MR. REYNOLDS: Just to elaborate on the chairman's comments, that's quite correct, Mrs. Laing. There would be no tax exemption granted by this Bill. That's what they had originally asked for. When they delved into it further and realized that no tax exemptions had been granted in Bills by the Private Bills Committee since 1993 or at least since the coming into force of the new Municipal Government Act, they went ahead and just wanted to incorporate the private college. So the Bill is now of course basically like any other Bill that we've seen in the last three years incorporating a private college. So they have no special status as it were.

MRS. LAING: Thank you. Okay.

THE CHAIRMAN: Any other questions or discussion?

AN HON. MEMBER: Question.

THE CHAIRMAN: Are you ready for the question?

MRS. FRITZ: I did have one question just for clarification. So all these pages of amendments don't so significantly change the Bill that we should have a new Bill before us?

MS DEAN: No. The only change is in section 5(1)(a).

MRS. FRITZ: So it's just a title change and then the 5(1)(a).

THE CHAIRMAN: No.

MRS. FRITZ: I read this one yesterday and now am looking at this today.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. The change from yesterday to today is insignificant.

MRS. FRITZ: Okay.

THE CHAIRMAN: We're adding the two words "religious studies."

MRS. FRITZ: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Okay. I'll take your word for it.

THE CHAIRMAN: But I think you raise a point that maybe Mr. Reynolds should address as to the nature of the amendment itself and its relationship to the original Bill.

MR. REYNOLDS: Well, the amendment does, of course, change the Bill quite dramatically, but the point is that private Bills are a little different than other Bills in the sense that private Bills are referred to a committee before second reading, so the Assembly has not voted on the principle of the Bill yet. I mean, what would happen is that if the committee does in fact recommend the amendments, the chairman would include the amendments with his report. Then the Assembly would know what it is the committee is recommending and would have it before them on second reading, although the amendments actually wouldn't be made until Committee of the Whole.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Yankowsky.

MR. YANKOWSKY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just before we vote, I wonder if Mr. Reynolds can enlighten us. Is there any precedent setting here at all in what we're doing for all kinds of other organizations to come out asking for tax exemptions?

MR. REYNOLDS: Mr. Yankowsky, if the amendments were recommended by the committee and if the amendments passed the House, there would be no tax exemptions in this Bill. The only, quote, tax exemptions they would receive would be the ones allowed to all private colleges under the Municipal Government Act. So that's one of the reasons the title would be changing, because it's no longer a tax exemption Bill.

So if your question is: are there precedents for other private colleges to be incorporated? Yes. In fact, the committee recommended two to the House, which passed two just in the spring: the Evangel and Bethesda bible colleges. There are several others. I mean, the amendments are based on the precedents from other private colleges. Just to reiterate, if the amendments go through, there are no tax exemptions in here.

MR. YANKOWSKY: Okay. Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Any further comments? All in favour of the motion, then, that the Bill proceed with amendment? Opposed? Carried.

I have no other business to come before the committee, so I think a motion to adjourn is in order.

MR. HERARD: So moved.

THE CHAIRMAN: All in favour?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE CHAIRMAN: Opposed? Carried. This meeting is adjourned.

[The committee adjourned at 9:08 a.m.]